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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

*Sen. Kennedy
Sen. Gaynor*

April 8, 1976

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AT [redacted] Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

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Thank you very much for taking the time to express your views on the status of fetal research in the United States.

As you know, the Federal Government is now operating under policy guidelines established by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The Commission was created as a result of legislation which I authored. After years of controversy and debate, the National Commission has succeeded in bringing about a general consensus on the scientific guidelines to be followed.

Although the Department of Health, Education and Welfare did not precisely implement the recommendations of the National Commission, they did follow most of them. The remaining differences are in the process of being resolved.

I do not believe that guidelines for the conduct of fetal research can be developed by politicians alone. Nor do I believe they can be developed by fetal researchers alone. The National Commission brought the best minds in the country to bear on this issue. The Commissioners reflect diverse backgrounds and a wide variety of disciplines. They sought input from all interest parties all over the country. They deliberated for many months and reached a consensus on that basis.

Not every citizen can be fully pleased with government policy on so controversial an issue. But every citizen can take pride in the manner in which the government policy was arrived at. I think the scholarly, deliberative approach of the National Commission on the fetal research issue can be a model for the solution of other complex ethical dilemmas presented to us by the rapid advance in medical technology. I believe the Commission deserves continuing support.

Sincerely,

Ed Kennedy

Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman
Senate Health Subcommittee